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THE ADDRESS OF THE *Truſtees, Local Preachers, Stewards, and Leaders of the* LAUNCESTON CIRCUIT,

TO THE PREACHERS and private MEMBERS of the METHODIST SOCIETIES, late in connexion with the *Rev. JOHN WESLEY.*

DEAR BRETHREN,

THE welfare of the Connexion, and the cauſe of God, call upon us to bear our teſtimony to the truth, in conſequence of an Addreſs publiſhed by ſome of the Mancheſter and Stock-port Truſtees. We pretend not to be perfectly acquainted with the minute particulars of the conteſt at Briſtol: nor do we think thoſe Gentlemen of Mancheſter and Stock-port juſtifiable in their bold aſſertions, grounded upon information received at a diſtance and from Men of their own party alone. However, there are ſome general points of the firſt magnitude dependant upon the preſent diſpute, which call for the deepeſt attention of the whole Connexion. To theſe we ſhall ſpeak.

IT is allowed on all hands, that the Truſtees of Broadmead and Guinea-Street Chapples in Briſtol, expelled Mr. Moore without conſulting the Stewards and Leaders of the Society, and without the leaſt attention to the minds of the People. It is this which we moſt highly diſapprove of. It is inconſiſtent with any degree whatſoever of religious liberty. Why do the people join in Societies? Why do they attend the Ordinances of Grace? Why do they ſubſcribe for places of Divine Worſhip? Is it not, that their minds may be enlightened, their hearts changed, and their ſouls ſaved? And are theſe matters of ſmall importance? Shall the people entruſt the Salvation of their ſouls to any ſet of Truſtees whatever? For an *abſolute* negative in Truſtees as to the Miniſters of the Goſpel, amounts to an *abſolute* uſurpation of religious authority over the conſciences of the People in the moſt tender and ſacred points. Who are they that ſupport the cauſe of God, under the Divine influence and bleſſing? Are they not *the People?* How inſignificant are the contributions of the Truſtees, compared to the ſubſcriptions and collections of the whole body of the People? If the Truſtees ſay, "We are reſponſible for large ſums of Money" we anſwer, It is not they ſo much as *the People.* When were the Truſtees in *one* inſtance for half a century, obliged to pay the money for which they were *legally* reſponſible? Have not the people in *every* inſtance diſcharged the debt? and the Truſtees did it only in proportion as a part of the People? The Truſtees are indeed *legally* reſponſible on account of the neceſſity of the caſe; but their burdens have been removed on every emergency by the exertions of the People. And ſhall the people be excluded from any choice or negative, in reſpect to thoſe miniſters, who are to be their Guides to eternal life? We abhor the idea. It is the eſſence of Popery: with only this difference, that the power of the Pope is here lodged in ſmall ariſtocratic Bodies, inſtead of one abſolute Head. We will ſubmit to no ſuch abominable uſurpation; and let thoſe who are ſo daſtardly as to do it, reap the conſequence.

LET us not be miſtaken. We are not enemies to ariſtocracy, much leſs to monarchy. We honor and revere the King; and we love the Conſtitution

Conſtitution of our Country. We conſider the Truſtees as the Ariſtocratic part of our Connexion, and would wiſh, that a conſiderable power ſhould be inveſted in their hands. Let the majority of the Truſtees *of a Circuit* have a negative in reſpect to the Preachers appointed from time to time by the Conference; but let not that negative be effectual without the conſent of the Majority of the Stewards and Leaders of *the ſame Circuit*. Let this negative reach to Doctrines, Morals, and Gifts. We ſhould prefer this *double* negative to a *ſingle* one, given by the Truſtees, Stewards and Leaders in one Aſſembly, as we think, upon the whole, it would be more impartial, and more favourable to mercy. However, we ſhould not object to a negative given by the Truſtees, Stewards and Leaders, met in one aſſembly; altho we ſhould prefer the double negative for the reaſons before given.

THIS double or ſingle negative ſhould not reſt in the Truſtees, Stewards and Leaders of a ſingle Society. This would be *deſpotic*. It would be deſpotiſm over the reſt of the Circuit. If our Itinerant Plan be preſerved, (and GOD forbid it ſhould be dropped!) all the Perſons, who receive inſtruction from the Preachers, ſhould have a voice in reſpect to the removal of a Preacher appointed to labour among them. This would be no hardſhip to the larger Societies, as they have a proportionably greater number of Truſtees, Stewards and Leaders, than the ſmaller. Suffer us Brethren, to ſpeak out. In the general, the Truſtees are the Richeſt Men in the Connexion, and not the moſt ſpiritual. A Preacher, of the holieſt life, and of the greateſt unction in the Pulpit, may diſpleaſe their critical underſtandings, while the force of his word is felt by every ſpiritual ſoul, and ſinners are awakened on every hand. For it is "not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, ſaith the Lord." Let every one then have a vote, who is ſo deeply intereſted in the ſubject: the Truſtees, as the Ariſtocracy, in their upper houſe, of themſelves individually; and the People in their lower houſe, by their repreſentatives, the Stewards and Leaders of their Societies. We cannot conceive how any Truſtee can object to this, who loves the Itinerant plan, and does not wiſh to eſtabliſh the worſt of all Governments, a perfect ariſtocracy, through the Methodiſt Connexion.

BUT it may be objected, What will then become of the authority of the Conference? We anſwer, The Conference will have the *appointment* of the Preachers, and that appointment will revert to them annually; which is as great a power in the preſent inſtance as ought to be inveſted in any ſet of Men whatever. We are far from wiſhing that the Conference ſhould be abſolute. We deteſt the Idea. But we are perſwaded, that the Preachers aſſembled together in their annual Meeting, are compleater Judges of the work at large, than any ſet of Truſtees, private Society, or Circuit can be. *They* therefore are the proper perſons to make the general appointment: and the negative of the Truſtees, Stewards and Leaders in each Circuit, will be a ſufficient guard againſt the abuſe of that power; a ſatisfactory mode being Eſtabliſhed to the mutual ſatisfaction of both parties, for the filling up of any Vacancy made by the exerciſe of the negative.*

THE following hints, BRETHREN, we lay before you with all ſubmiſſion. But we muſt declare, that we highly diſapprove of the conduct of the Truſtees of Broadmead and Guinea-Street Chapels, for trifling as they have done, with ſo important a Talent as the Gift of Preaching. The great

* See the Circular Letter, printed in the Minutes of the laſt Conference.

great revival of the work of GOD in theſe Kingdoms, is principally carried on by about three hundred Travelling Preachers. How ſmall a number for ſo great a work! And ſhall a reſpectable Miniſter of the Goſpel, whoſe purity of life and doctrine, and whoſe abilities, have never been called in queſtion, nay, have been highly prized; ſhall ſuch a Man be expelled from the Congregation which he was appointed to ſerve by GOD and his Brethren, merely for doing *that* which no one can dare to call immoral; and for doing it with the approbation of all the People immediately concerned, and as far as we can judge from all the documents which we have read on both ſides of the queſtion, with the expreſs permiſſion of the Conference. And ſhall this be done by a ſet of Truſtees who had no manner of Juriſdiction in the buſineſs, in reſpect to a Chapel, with which they had no manner of concern. Such men would not ſcruple, we are perſwaded, to ſilence one half of the Travelling Preachers, if in their power, unleſs they in all things ſubmitted without reſerve to their deciſions. And could theſe Truſtees, or five hundred ſuch, ſupply the place of one ſingle Ambaſſador of Chriſt? If not, what regard could theſe Men be ſuppoſed to have for the Church of GOD, for the welfare of mankind, and the great revival which GOD is carrying on upon the face of the earth! What would in this caſe become of the faithful Teſtimony of Jeſus? However much to be deprecated a diviſion would be, it would be infinitely preferable to ſuch cruel deſpotiſm, even if but a fourth, but a tenth part of the preachers, would unitedly and cordially ſupport the Methodiſt Diſcipline on the principles of true religious liberty. O how great is the Gift of Goſpel-preaching? How carefully is it diſpenſed of GOD? And how carefully ſhould it be huſbanded by Mankind.

As to the Ordinances of the Goſpel, we are thankful to GOD and our Preachers for the priveleges we enjoy: and we moſt cordially deſire, that ſuch regulations may be made at the next Conference, as may eſtabliſh peace in all our borders.

THE abuſive expreſſions, which are urged in the Mancheſter Addreſs, with all the inſolence of Office, againſt Dr. COKE and his Brethren, Men whom we highly eſteem and love, are ſo contrary to the ſpirit of Chriſtianity, that we are even reluctant to make any obſervations on the ſubject. Happy it is for them, that their Characters are far beyond the reach of thoſe injurious Men. But we leave the mean dealers of ſuch low ſcandal, to the puniſhment of their own Conſciences, and to the GOD who ſays "Vengeance is mine, I will repay."

THUS, beloved and reſpected Brethren, we have humbly laid before you our thoughts on this important ſubject. If any thing has been urged agreeable to the will of GOD, we pray that it may be made a bleſſing to us all. We beg your pardon for the liberty we have taken, ſubſcribing ourſelves, with great ſincerity,

Your affectionate Brethren,

January, 1795,

Wm. Baron,
John Burnard.

James Palmer, Truſtee,
John Bray, Truſtee and Local Preacher,
William Pearſe, Truſtee,
Nicholas Burt, Steward,

LAUNCESTON.

John Edgcombe, Local Preacher,
Richard Geake, ditto,
Thomas Geake, ditto, and Steward,
Digory Foll, Local Preacher,
John Nicholas, Claſs Leader, and Steward,
Elijah Rawling, Claſs Leader and Steward,
Robert Davy, Claſs Leader,
James Gartrell, ditto.
Thomas Jaſper, ditto,
Thomas Dinner, Proprietor,
John Body, Claſs Leader.

Mr John King

Methodist Chapel

Gainsborough

Lincolnshire

Single